

Convention, urged prohibition of slave importation into the United States. In 1797, Charles Carroll of Carrollton introduced a bill into the General Assembly for the gradual abolition of slavery. Neither measure was successful, but neither needed to be in Maryland, for Maryland people had already found the institution repugnant and were themselves free. In 1790, for instance, only one Maryland Negro in 14 was free. By 1860, half the Negroes in the State were free men and women, because they had been liberated by their former masters. And in 1831, moreover, the State did take cognizance of the matter. It set out to right the wrong. From that year on, until the war started, it appropriated ten thousand dollars annually to aid a colonization society to return free Negroes to Africa and see that they were properly settled. Thus our State established a successful colony in Liberia, where, today, a county is still called by our name—Maryland. Finally, Maryland abolished slavery in November, 1864—ahead of the federal government, which did not take the action until the following year. Certainly it was not the institution of slavery that brought our State into the Civil War, since we were already ridding ourselves of it in a planned manner that provided care for the liberated people.

How long ago it was, my friends! What progress all the citizens of our State have made in this century that lies between! Let us, as well as we can, commemorate the acts of grace which somehow came out of the cruel war, and see in them lessons that outshine any and all battles. For that reason, let us all take pride in the act of supreme humanity which brings us together here today—the care of the citizens of this community for human dignity, extended to otherwise forgotten dead. Extended without personal reason, without the ties of relationship or affection that motivate such care normally. Extended simply because human beings should respect one another. Here the people felt that rule and acted accordingly. What they did should never be forgotten. I am proud to be a part of this significant ceremony, and I know that I shall always remember it.

Yes, a century has passed. It was a hundred years ago, as you are all aware, that our Maryland poet, James Ryder Randall, wrote the verses that are now our State song. Wrote what many young men were saying, both North and South, in that moment of wild excitement, wrote the feverish emotions of the times. Being a poet, he put them into song. Thus he commemorated four years in which our State, for reasons beyond its control, was involved in a conflict that was contrary to its long tradition of tolerance. What would he write if he were here today? I have allowed myself to think that, without the spur of the bewildering